

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 20-24, as follows:

1 1-19. (Cancelled)

1 20. (currently amended) An apparatus for etching a tapered trench in a layer of material,
2 said layer of material having a mask on adjacent-a surface thereof, said mask having an opening
3 defining a location on the layer of material at which the trench is to be formed, said apparatus
4 comprising:

5 an etching tool adapted to enlarge for performing vertical etch process steps on
6 said layer of material; and

7 an opening enlarging tool adapted to enlarge for performing steps of enlarging
8 said opening in said mask, said etching tool and said opening enlarging tool adapting to operate
9 operating in an alternating manner in order to form a trench of a desired depth in said layer of
10 material.

1 21. (currently amended) The apparatus according to Claim 20, wherein said mask
2 comprises a resist layer, and wherein said mask opening enlarging tool is adapted to perform
3 comprises a tool for performing resist layer etching etch process steps on said resist layer.

1 22. (currently amended) The apparatus according to Claim 21, wherein said resist layer
2 is tapered around a the periphery of said opening, to facilitate performing of the resist etch
3 process steps.

1 23. (currently amended) The apparatus according to Claim 20, 21, wherein said etching
2 ~~vertical etch process tool~~ and said opening enlarging resist etch process tool are incorporated in a
3 tool that operates in a pulsed manner.

1 24. (currently amended) The apparatus according to Claim 20 21, wherein said etching
2 ~~vertical etch process tool~~ and said opening enlarging resist etch process tool are incorporated in a
3 tool that operates in a multi step manner.